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SUMMARY

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PRESENT AND FUTURE TRENDS IN THE USE OF PLASTICS, PAPER AND BOARD FOR PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION

By David J. LISTON, M.B.E.

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SUMMARY

PRESENT AND FUTURE TRENDS IN THE USE OF PLASTICS, PAPER AND BOARD FOR PACKAGING AND DISTRIBUTION

David J. Liston, M.B.E.

1. Packaging is one of the great growth industries of modern times. In this paper we are concerned mainly with paper and plastic packaging, especially thermo plastics as they possess properties of the greatest value in the packaging field. Packaging is an intermediate service providing industry with the means of distributing their products. It is sensitive to changes in the national economy and therefore tends to be a barometer of economic progress.

2. Although the tinplate can and glass container have maintained a remarkable growth in the last decade, progress has been most spectacular among the "soft" packaging materials - plastics, paper and board. They are well suited to modern needs as they are attractive, light in weight and cheap. Moreover the growth of branding and of self service has created a demand for a wider range of attractively wrapped goods.

Consumption of Polyolefin (plastic) film in the U.S.A. has more than doubled in the last five years, and some 80% is used for packaging. Paper packaging has also increased very fast and paper consumed has risen in many countries especially Germany and Japan.

3. Many factors which led to this expansion still persist. There have been many innovations in packaging machinery and many refinements in the techniques of paper and board manufacture; particularly in laminations and coatings incorporating other materials notably plastic films and aluminium foils. As a result paper and board converters are able to offer a spectacular range of new products.

Developments in plastics have been even more far reaching. Polythene is used as a transparent film and for moulded articles, particularly squeeze bottles. Recently it has been used as a heat seal coating for other materials. Nearly 50% of polythene today is used for packaging.

Like polythene, polystyrene has benefited from falling prices. It is widely used for injection moulded articles. It has also been discovered that when stretched (bi-axially oriented) a brilliantly clear and attractive film is produced. The latest arrival, Polypropylene,

is also likely to be used as a bi-axially oriented film. As it may be produced in very thin gauges, it will compete with cellophane film and may soon challenge cheaper materials.

4. There seems little doubt that there will be future expansion in packaging, and it remains to consider trends in package consuming countries. The major features supporting the growth of packaging have been: Advances in technology: changes in marketing and distribution as well as social tastes and habits and increasing expenditure on packaging with the growth of national income.

There have been great advances in self service, especially in America but also in Europe. In Germany there are now 30,000 self service stores accounting for 35/40% of retail food sales. There are indeed supermarkets all over the world. Self service demands pre-packing of every article and presents unlimited opportunities for expansion.

The recent advances in food technology, such as quick freezing and dehydration make new demands on packaging. Many foods are packed in cartons with a plastic coating or in laminated pouches. Bacon is vacuum packed in a cellophane/polythene pouch. There are numerous other developments; detergents, bleaches, polishes and motor oil are all now offered in plastic bottles. A start has been made in soft drinks, milk and even wine.

5. These trends and developments are spreading throughout the world in the less developed countries. Many operations are carried out through co-operative pack houses. In this way both tropical and temperate products are prepared for domestic and export markets.

There are other more specialized applications in various countries. Plastic films are used as containers for seedlings and as shrouds for bananas. Milk in East Africa and sweets in Nigeria are packed in polythene bags. Polythene sacks are used for packing fertilizers and animal foodstuffs. India has made progress in pilfer-proof packs. Various products, such as dried fruit, nuts, dried peas and tablets are packed in laminations.

6. This paper describes new trends which clearly reflect a revolution in tastes and preferences of the public. Many trends have been already fully exploited. In the U.S.A. in particular it would be unwise to expect such fast growth as in the last 10 years; but in Western Europe many trends have still to develop full momentum. Per Capita consumption of paper shows European Countries to have a substantially smaller consumption than the U.S.A.

In some countries these trends are just beginning and for many reasons paper and plastics offer attractive possibilities. Paper and plastics can commence with a relatively low capital outlay and are well suited to making small packages, a factor of great importance in countries where purchasing power is low. Their light weight facilitates transportation and their properties are comprehensive enough to stand up to the extremes of climate. There is little doubt that developments in the emerging countries will ensure a steady rate of growth of packaging for many years.

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